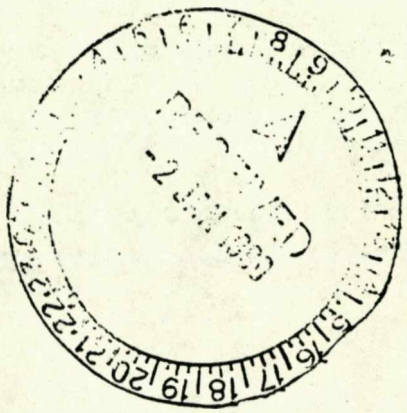
7 Pat, For your info. Kathy

TL 2925

Minister for Trade Negotiations
and Acting Minister for Foreign
Affairs and Trade

AUSTRALIA

Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Mr Russell Rollason
Executive Director
Australian Council For Overseas Aid
GPO Box 1562
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Rollason

In the absence of Senator Evans overseas, I am replying to your letter dated 9 November 1989 concerning East Timor.

You will already have received Senator Evans's letter to you of 23 November 1989 which refers to the visit to East Timor by the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Mr Philip Flood, from 23-27 October, and his report on the allegations of human rights abuses. In that letter Senator Evans indicated that Mr Flood had expressed the Australian Government's concern at reports that some of the students who were involved in the demonstration which occurred during the Papal Mass held in Dili on 12 October may have been treated harshly.

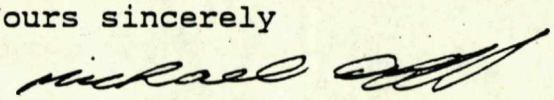
I am aware of the reports that some highly respected Priests are being accused of instigating the demonstration despite official denials by the Church in Dili. During his visit to East Timor, Mr Flood expressed to Indonesian authorites the Australian Government's concern that those priests under investigation for involvement in the Papal Mass demonstration be treated fairly. The Australian Embassy in Jakarta will continue to monitor this matter closely.

In relation to the ACFOA Executive's concern about "the continuing evasive and repressive military presence in East Timor and the deeply detrimental effect it is having on human rights, human relations and people's development in East Timor" you will be aware that throughout the New Order Government of President Soeharto, the Indonesian Armed Forces have formalised a "dual function" role, both as guardians of national security and as a socio-political force. This dual role has its roots in the decisive role played by the Indonesian Armed Forces in Indonesia's struggle for independence. The belief that the Armed Forces have a role to play in the civilian administration, political life and economic development of the nation, in addition to their traditional defence and security role, means that one finds military personnel in Parliament, in national and provincial government positions, and in the bureaucracy. Armed Forces personnel are also commonly used to assist in development

projects throughout the country.

In order to respect confidences, Mr Flood's written report on his visit to East Timor, because of its confidential nature, is not publicly available. However, you may contact Ms Ilze Svenne, Assistant Secretary, South East Asia Branch (Ph: 61-2891) of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade if you would like to arrange an oral briefing on the visit.

Yours sincerely



MICHAEL DUFFY